

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 803

By Henry

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Earl Scruggs, an American musical treasure.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly and music fans around the globe were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of bluegrass music legend and American treasure, Mr. Earl Scruggs; and

WHEREAS, Earl Scruggs was revered around the world as a musical genius whose innovative talent on the five-string banjo pioneered modern banjo playing and he crafted the sound we know as bluegrass music. We will never see his superior; and

WHEREAS, born on January 6, 1924, in Flint Hill, North Carolina, Earl Eugene Scruggs was the son of George Elam Scruggs, a farmer and bookkeeper who played the banjo and fiddle, and Lula Ruppe Scruggs, who played the pump organ in church; and

WHEREAS, after losing his father at the age of four, Earl Scruggs began playing banjo and guitar at a very young age, using the two-finger picking style on the banjo until he was about ten years old, when he began to use three - the thumb, index, and middle finger - in an innovative up-picking style that would become world-renowned and win international acclaim; and

WHEREAS, as a young man, Mr. Scruggs' banjo mastery led him to play area dances and radio shows with various bands, including Lost John Miller and His Allied Kentuckians. In December of 1945, he quit high school and joined Bill Monroe's band, the Blue Grass Boys; and

WHEREAS, with his magnificent banjo picking, the group's popularity soared and Earl Scruggs redefined the sound of bluegrass music, as evidenced on such classic Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys tracks as "Blue Moon of Kentucky," "Blue Grass Breakdown," and "Molly and Tenbrooks (The Race Horse Song)"; and

WHEREAS, with his mastery of the banjo and guitar matched only by his beautiful baritone, Mr. Scruggs' wowed music fans who saw the group play live with his musicianship

while millions listened to his performances on the Grand Ole Opry radio program every week; and

WHEREAS, in 1948, Mr. Scruggs left the Blue Grass Boys and teamed up with fellow former Blue Grass Boy Lester Flatt to form the Foggy Mountain Boys, a group that would eventually become, to many fans, the greatest bluegrass group of all-time; and

WHEREAS, seemingly overnight, the duo and their band took the music world by storm, becoming members of the Grand Ole Opry, appearing in a Broadway show, hosting their own radio program sponsored by Martha White Flour and later hosting a syndicated television show; and

WHEREAS, led by Mr. Scruggs' distinctive banjo, the duo became a favorite of folk fans during the late 1950s and early 1960s, which led to their number one hit, "The Ballad of Jed Clampett" – the theme song to the television show, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, on which they also made guest starring appearances on several occasions; and

WHEREAS, performing at sold-out shows across the country, Earl Scruggs and Lester Flatt played the legendary Avalon Ballroom in San Francisco and Mr. Scruggs made a historic appearance at the first Newport Folk Festival; and

WHEREAS, in 1967, Earl Scruggs' extraordinary banjo-licks thrilled movie audiences as their 1949 recording of "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" was included in the soundtrack of the Hollywood blockbuster, *Bonnie and Clyde*; and

WHEREAS, in 1969, Earl Scruggs chose to follow his musical interests and continuous pursuit of musical innovation by ending Flatt & Scruggs to begin performing with his sons in the Earl Scruggs Revue; and

WHEREAS, over the next few decades, Mr. Scruggs continued to perform with his family and also recorded and performed with a host of renowned musical artists, including Elton John, Sting, Don Henley, Johnny Cash, Dwight Yoakam, Vince Gill, and Melissa Ethridge; and

WHEREAS, a mentor to countless musicians, Earl Scruggs sought to encourage each one to follow his or her dream and he loved to play with young pickers, from whom he learned innovations or unique licks; and

WHEREAS, a winner of a cornucopia of awards and accolades, Earl Scruggs won four Grammy Awards and received the Recording Academy's Lifetime Achievement Award on

February 10, 2008. He was also awarded a National Heritage Fellowship in 1989, received the National Medal of Arts in 1992, was inducted into the County Music Hall of Fame in 1985, and was an inaugural inductee into the International Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame in 1991; and

WHEREAS, a member of the Grand Ole Opry since 1955, Mr. Scruggs saw "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" selected to join the Library of Congress's National Recording Registry in 2005. It ensures that his work will continue to come to the attention of generations of music fans; and

WHEREAS, Earl Scruggs was most appropriately acknowledged by country singer Porter Wagoner in 2004, when he stated that: "Earl was to the five-string banjo what Babe Ruth was to baseball. He is the best that ever was and the best there ever will be"; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Scruggs was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Annie Louise Certain Scruggs, and their son, Steven Earl Scruggs; and

WHEREAS, all the world mourns his loss, but none so greatly as his devoted children, Gary Scruggs and Randy Scruggs, his five adored grandchildren, and his six cherished great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this master musician, whose legend and musical legacy will be treasured forever; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Earl Scruggs, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Scruggs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.